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The President's Daily Brief

September 28, 1976

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LEBANON: *Preliminary press reports this morning, quoting Palestinian sources, claim Syrian and Lebanese Christian forces have opened an offensive in the mountains east of Beirut.*

Lebanese President Sarkis had continued yesterday to probe leaders of every persuasion as to their attitude toward a settlement.

A meeting between Sarkis and PLO leader Arafat scheduled for Sunday was canceled after leftist leader Kamal Jumblatt was fired on following an earlier meeting with Sarkis. Sarkis met yesterday with Christian extremist leader Shamun, who reiterated his hard-line position.

The Shia Muslim community in south Lebanon is completely alienated from the Palestinians, according to the Lebanese ambassador to Iran who has just returned from home leave.

The ambassador, who is from a prominent family in south Lebanon, told US embassy officials in Tehran that the Palestinians treat the local population with contempt, expropriate property, demand payoffs, and kill for real or imagined slights. The Shias of the south are ready to oust the Palestinians and have discussed some form of military cooperation with Christian leaders.

The ambassador also said there is widespread disillusionment among both officers and enlisted men of the Lebanese Arab Army--the breakaway Muslim faction that was allied with the leftists--who now feel they have been fighting for no useful cause and are defecting in growing numbers. 25X1

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The defection of the Lebanese Arab Army would not seriously weaken leftist ranks. The present tendency toward realignment, however, does appear to reflect the low morale of leftist and Palestinian forces--and the friction between them--as the war drags on and the initiative seems to remain in Christian and Syrian hands.

An indication of Soviet support for Syria's position in Lebanon appeared in Pravda yesterday.

Pravda carried a news report on President Asad's speech to his troops on the Israeli border. The report included Asad's justification for the presence of Syrian troops in Lebanon as well as his specific criticism of the PLO role there.

Moscow seems to be making an effort to acknowledge the realities of the Lebanese situation. A Soviet official in Cairo recently said the Soviets believed it was necessary for the Syrians to remain in Lebanon to guarantee any settlement of the crisis.

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USSR: *The Soviets are building a new radar facility in the north-central USSR that apparently will complement the existing early warning coverage against ballistic missiles.*

The size of the antenna at the new facility at Pechora and the distance from it to the associated control building suggest that the phased-array radar being built there will provide much better tracking, prediction and target-tracking capabilities than the existing Hen House radars in the USSR. Another new but different kind of phased-array radar is being built at Olenegorsk.

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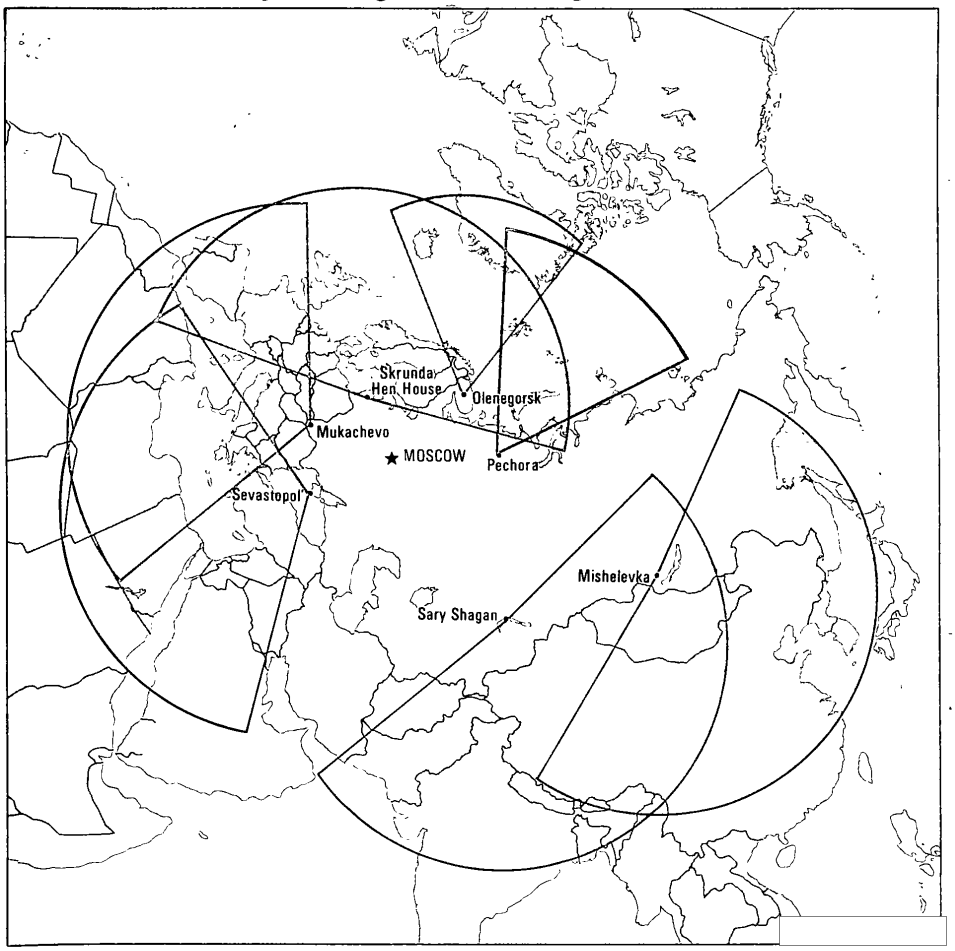
Ballistic Missile Early Warning Radar Coverage



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Early warning radar coverage

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The construction of additional ballistic missile early warning radars is not prohibited by the ABM treaty, provided they are located on the periphery of the Soviet Union and are oriented outward, as the Pechora and Olenegorsk radars are. The treaty does, however, bar the construction of any additional ABM battle management radars.

The new large antennas at Pechora and Olenegorsk have the potential for use in ABM battle management rather than early warning. The radars, however, would add nothing to the current capabilities of the Moscow ABM system, and we see no indications that the Soviets intend to deploy ABM missiles outside the Moscow area.

The Pechora antenna is oriented toward the west coast of the US and would detect ICBMs launched into the central USSR. The Olenegorsk antenna is oriented toward the eastern US and could detect US ICBMs launched into western USSR. The Soviets would still lack early warning coverage of US ICBMs launched toward the far eastern USSR, and consequently may build two or more radars along the northern border to fill this gap.

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ANGOLA-USSR: *President Agostinho Neto will seek clarification of the USSR's role in Angola when he visits Moscow early next month.*

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The Angolans may have balked during the May meeting at a Soviet request for access to Angolan naval and air facilities. This would have lessened Moscow's generosity. The USSR may raise the issue again, although there is no reason to believe that Neto's position has changed.

From the Soviet standpoint, Neto's visit is well timed because it offers Soviet leaders an opportunity to press their attack against the Rhodesian settlement plan. Neto will probably be cautious about associating himself with any Soviet attacks that would put him out of step with other front-line African presidents inasmuch as he values his newly acquired status as a member of this group.

The Soviet visit could be offset somewhat by Angola's expected resumption of diplomatic ties with Portugal at about the same time. The Angolan and Portuguese foreign ministers are to meet in Cape Verde around October 1 to work out final arrangements. Neto is anxious to resume the ties in order to balance his foreign relations and broaden his sources of assistance.

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NOTES

Japanese Prime Minister Miki has accepted the suggestion of officials from the Foreign Ministry and Japan Defense Agency that the US be allowed additional time for direct examination of the Soviet MIG-25.

Miki's revised deadline--extending direct US access to the aircraft through October 3--is apparently firm.

Foreign Minister Kosaka will confirm Japan's commitment to return the MIG-25 during his meeting with Foreign Minister Gromyko at the UN today, but reportedly will avoid giving Gromyko a firm date. Japanese defense officials calculate that it will take about two weeks to prepare the aircraft for shipment. Should negotiations for the transfer proceed rapidly, even the Japanese investigation of the MIG would be curtailed.

* * *

The Polish Supreme Court today suspended the prison sentences of seven workers who were jailed for activity during the strike in June.

In commenting on the action affecting the three-to-five year sentences, the court said that "a sense of social justice has been satisfied." The suspension, which is unprecedented, was obviously ordered by the top party hierarchy.

The Polish population will view the suspension of the sentences as a conciliatory gesture by Warsaw, but will also see it as another sign of public power over the leaders.

In addition to placating the Polish people, the regime was responding to pleas from the Polish episcopate and to demands of West European communist parties that the strikers be treated leniently.

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The fourth Cuban convoy from Angola has reached home waters and should arrive at the naval port of Mariel by mid-week.

One or more of the four ships in the group stopped briefly at the port of Santiago in southeastern Cuba yesterday before continuing their trip around the island. Several ships in the third convoy made a similar stopover, possibly to unload wounded troops or those who were from Cuba's eastern provinces.

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Chinese nuclear test in the atmosphere on September 26

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Sterling has fallen over 5 percent since the Bank of England stopped intervening in support of the pound on September 9. The British pound closed yesterday at $1.68, a record low against the dollar.

A general uncertainty and lack of confidence in the UK economy has been exacerbated recently by uneasiness that the fringe benefits won by the British Seamen's union

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would lead to other union demands for similar treatment. The Bank of England's apparent reluctance to continue to support the pound has compounded the problem.

The Bank stopped intervention operations in an attempt to preserve its remaining foreign exchange reserves and to avoid further drawing on its $5.3 billion standby credit. Support operations through the first eight months of this year have cost the Bank an estimated $5.5 billion. The Bank's current $1 billion drawings against the standby credit become due in early December.

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